

Medicare is one of the crowning achievements of this century for the American people. With this legislation and with the other challenges that we intend to face and overcome, we can make sure, as we become an older and older and older country—which is, I always say, a high-class problem—that Medicare will be one

of the crowning achievements of the 21st century as well.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in Room 1100 at the Longworth Office Building on Capitol Hill.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Reception

March 17, 1998

The President. Thank you very much. Every time Al Gore has a crowd like this, he always says, "Thank you for the standing ovation." [Laughter] *Taoiseach*, Miss Larkin, to all of our guests, all the ambassadors here, all the Members of Congress, distinguished guests from the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and all across the United States.

There are so many Americans here who love Ireland and long for peace, I hesitate to mention any, but I must mention two: First, I would like to thank our distinguished Ambassador, who has just announced her resignation a few months hence, Jean Kennedy Smith. Thank you, ma'am, for everything you have done. And I have to thank one other person who is in his present position because on one late, very sad night in 1994, my legendary powers of persuasion fell flat, and I was unable to persuade George Mitchell to run for reelection. He is still trying to determine whether, as a consequence, I bestowed upon him a blessing or a curse. [Laughter] It's why I always tell him it is, after all, in his hands. Thank you, Senator Mitchell, for what you are doing. We appreciate that.

In his inaugural address, President Kennedy proposed a new approach to the cold war when he said, "Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those which divide us." He eloquently insisted civility is not a sign of weakness. If that was true for two great, distant, often alien superpowers like the United States and the Soviet Union, surely it is true for neighbors in Ireland.

Tonight we have here in this room representatives, leaders of all the parties to the peace talks. It is a great night. I was thinking in sort of my impish way that I almost wish I could give them a perfectly harmless—perfectly harm-

less—3-day cold, which would require them all to be quarantined in the Green Room. [Laughter] It's not a very big room, the Green Room—[laughter]—and we have a lot of parties to the talks. So in just 3 days of getting over a cold together, I think all these problems would be solved.

Well, the peace talks won't be that easy, but all of you, you have to seize this historic moment. Just think, in just a few weeks, you could lift this enormous burden from the shoulders of all the children of Ireland.

It has been said that St. Patrick's Day is the day when the entire world wishes it were Irish. Well, when lasting peace finally comes, the entire world will rejoice. When I heard the wonderful songs up here and Frank's wonderful reading, and all the eloquence of Irish passion and pain and joy came flooding out of the performers, young and old, I was reminded of that great line from Yeats: "In dreams begin responsibility." All the Irish are dreamers. In the next few weeks, if Irish responsibility measures up to Irish dreams, this next year's celebration here will be the greatest in the history of this great house.

God bless you.

[At this point, the First Lady introduced Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland, the *Taoiseach*, who then made brief remarks.]

The President. We're about to leave. I feel duty bound, because there are so many people from Massachusetts here today—[laughter]—to tell you that in Massachusetts this is a dual holiday. This is also the day when over 200 years ago the British left Massachusetts, so it's called Evacuation Day. [Laughter]

Now, that means that you must evacuate the White House. [Laughter] I have to say that so

State Secretary Mowlam doesn't think I made an anti-British slur here. [*Laughter*] But you needn't leave until 11:59 p.m.—[*laughter*]—because it will still be Evacuation Day. [*Laughter*] Enjoy. We love having you here. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks,

he referred to Celia Larkin, who accompanied Prime Minister Ahern; George J. Mitchell, independent chairman of the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland; Pulitzer Prize-winning author Frank McCourt; and Marjorie Mowlam, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Remarks at the Carpenters Joint Apprenticeship Training Center in Las Vegas, Nevada *March 18, 1998*

The President. Thank you. It's a good thing we've got a 22d amendment, or I would run again. Thanks for saying that. Let me begin by saying that when Maggie Carlton was talking, I leaned over to John Sweeney and I said, "John, I'd give anything if we could just get her speech on television tonight. That's the America we're trying to build for everybody."

I know that your husband and your daughters were proud of you, but I think every working man and woman out here was proud of you for what you said and what you represented. Your family is living proof that if we reward people for their work, if we enable people to succeed at work and at home raising their children, if we give them the chance to be good citizens, then America is going to do very well indeed.

I want to thank the others up here on this platform with me. I want to thank John Sweeney for his brilliant, energetic leadership of the labor movement. He has been terrific. I want to thank Doug McCarron for his leadership of the carpenters and his ever-present willingness to let me know exactly what he thinks I should be doing on every issue. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Bob Georgine for many things, but I want to congratulate him most recently on helping to bring about the major labor agreement in Nevada between building and construction trade workers, Bechtel, and the Department of Energy, and so many other triumphs on behalf of the working people he represents. Thank you.

I am especially indebted to Linda Chavez-Thompson, the executive vice president of the AFL-CIO, for her membership on the President's National Advisory Panel on Race in our

attempt to build an America in the 21st century where we all get along and work together across all the racial and ethnic lines that divide us.

Let me also say I am profoundly grateful to my former colleague and longtime friend, Governor Bob Miller; and to Mayor Jan Jones who was such a great friend of my mother's, as well as a friend of mine, for their personal kindness to me, and their leadership here in this great city and State. You are very well served, and I know you know that.

I brought a lot of folks with me today from the administration, but three in particular work with the labor movement. I thank the Deputy Secretary of Labor, Kitty Higgins, and Maria Echaveste and Karen Tramontano coming from the White House. They've worked with a lot of you, and they do a lot of work for you, whether you know it or not, every day. And I'm very proud of them.

Now, you know, I took a tour of what goes on here before I came out, and I told some of the folks on the tour—I thanked Bill Howard and Paul Sonner, who was the instructor in the classroom I visited, and all the people who are in the Joint Apprenticeship Training Center today who helped to enlighten me about what you're doing. But I told some folks that 30 years ago I actually spent a summer building houses, and I decided I didn't want to work that hard, which is how come I got into politics. [*Laughter*] It didn't strike me as being any easier now than it was 30 years ago. [*Laughter*]

But there are a lot of interesting things going on in this program. I hope, for example, that just my presence here and the fact that so many members of the media came with us will lead